

FCC Consumer Advisory

Telephone Service Help for Victims of Hurricane Katrina

The FCC understands that victims of natural or man-made disasters need access to telephone service, particularly in emergency situations. Toward this goal, the FCC is providing an estimated \$211 million in Universal Service Fund (USF or Fund) support to Hurricane Katrina victims, to help ensure they continue to have access to telecommunications services necessary to recover from this national tragedy.

The USF was created by Congress and the FCC to promote the availability of quality telephone service at affordable rates, and increase access of advanced telecommunications services nationwide to all customers. The Fund provides support to four programs – Low-Income, High-Cost, Schools and Libraries, and Rural Health Care. All telecommunications companies that provide service between states contribute to the Universal Service Fund.

Because of the catastrophic damage incurred by Hurricane Katrina, the FCC has modified its USF rules to more effectively target support to the disaster area and to help people affected by Hurricane Katrina. The FCC has put the following measures in place:

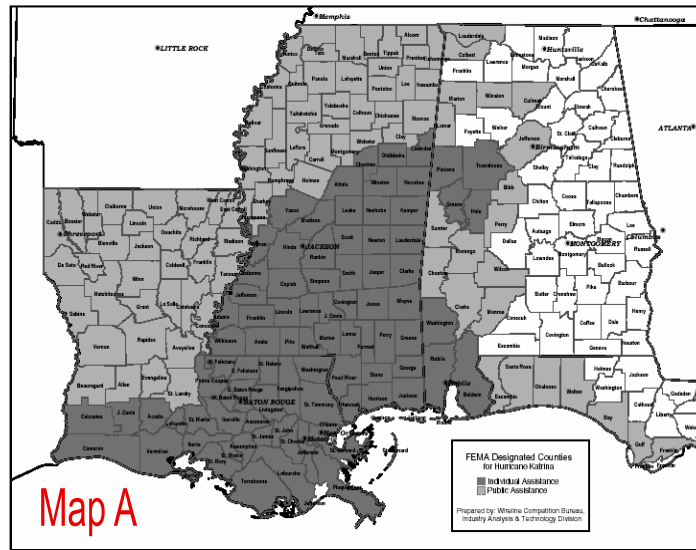
- **The FCC's Low Income Program** – Through the Lifeline Program, the FCC is providing support for free wireless handsets and a package of at least 300 free minutes (up to \$130 per household) for certain evacuees and other displaced people until March 1, 2006. This will help people in the affected areas who are eligible for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) individual housing assistance get in touch with loved ones, and make living and work arrangements. Additionally, through the Link-Up Program, the FCC is providing any person approved for FEMA individual housing assistance up to \$30 support per household to establish a new residential connection. This assistance is limited to one connection for temporary housing and one reconnection for hurricane victims returning to permanent residences and will be made available through March 1, 2007.

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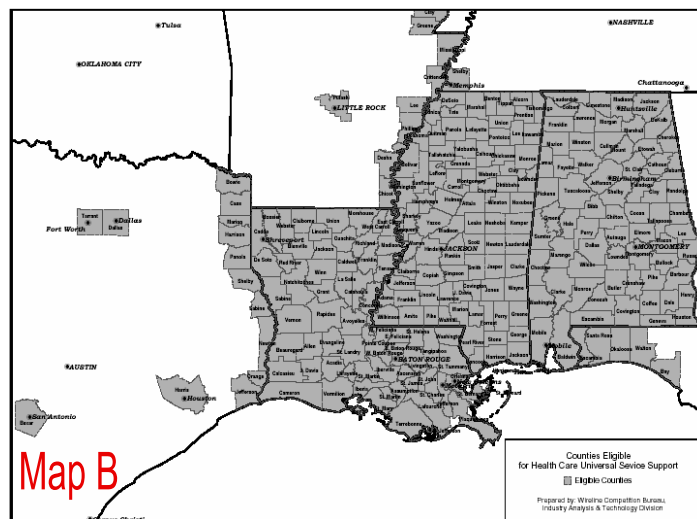
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The darkest-shaded counties on the attached Map A qualify for this support.



- **The FCC's Rural Health Care Program** – Public and non-profit health care providers, in both rural and non-rural areas, including American Red Cross shelters providing health care services to disaster victims, can apply for **support for advanced telecommunications and information services used for telemedicine applications to treat victims of Hurricane Katrina.**

For example, health care providers can use advanced telecommunications services to transmit x-rays and other medical information to doctors located in other areas for diagnosis and recommendations. This program is providing **discounts of 50%** for qualified health care providers serving the medical needs of victims of Hurricane Katrina. Eligible health care providers in the counties indicated on the attached Map B qualify for this support.



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- **The FCC's Schools and Libraries Program** – The FCC will open a new application window that allows schools and libraries in the affected areas to re-submit their requests for E-rate funds for the 2005 funding year. The FCC will assign the E-rate program's **highest priority to schools and libraries affected by Hurricane Katrina** to ensure that these schools are eligible for the steepest discounts available. These schools and libraries will continue to receive the highest level of priority for the 2006 funding year. Schools that have an increased student population and libraries that have more patrons because of the influx of evacuees may amend their applications for E-rate support this year to obtain additional funds. Qualifying participants in the affected areas may also substitute services or products in one broad category for another.
- **The FCC's High Cost Program** – This program provides support to carriers operating in high cost and rural areas. Because of the enormity of the hurricane damage, the FCC has concluded that the entire disaster zone should be considered a high-cost area. Therefore, the FCC will temporarily waive or modify its rules to allow carriers to prioritize universal service funds to **help rebuild facilities in areas damaged by the hurricane.**

Additionally, the FCC has information on wireless phone service help for Hurricane Katrina victims at <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/KatrinaWireless.html>.

For more information regarding Hurricane Katrina visit <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/katrina>. For further information on the FCC's Universal Service Program, visit [www.fcc.gov/wcb/universal service/](http://www.fcc.gov/wcb/universal_service/).

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10/18/05*

